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SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT APPLIED TO THE STEADY- ING OF EMPLOYMENT, AND ITS EFFECT IN AN INDUSTRIAL ESTABLISHMENT

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The effect of steadying employment in an industrial establishment is of such great and growing importance that it is well to say a few words in regard to the term "employment." The term employment is used so generally as to have various and more or less vague meanings, varying according to its use and its user. It is more commonly used to refer to the actual act of employing and means simply the hiring or putting of people on the payroll.

Practically every large industrial establishment today has an employment department whose business it is to hire the employees who are asked for by some foreman or other department head. While there can be no employment which does not begin with hiring, the kind of employment that this paper deals with contemplates hiring as only a part, and not the largest part, of the real employment problem. The real employment problem begins after the act of hiring has taken place and is a continuous function which does not cease until employment is ended. From this point of view employment is one of the most important functions of management in an industrial establishment.

As real or scientific management deals with the development and coördination of the welfare of each and every individual in the organization, the importance of scientific employment can readily be seen. This is being realized more and more by both managers and the public.

The object of an industrial organization is to coördinate effort for the continuous and permanent accomplishment of a definite purpose. Therefore, the steadying of employment is the most important problem of employment. For general purposes there are two kinds of problems which have to be considered in connection with the employment function as well as with other functions:

first, the problems of the function itself, and, second, the problems of all other functions in their relationship to the function under consideration.

It is the real problem of the employment function to keep every position necessary to carry on the business of the organization steadily and permanently filled with men and women best fitted for the purpose. For this purpose every industrial organization should have some one person or department whose sole business is the studying and handling of this problem. This is a function that cannot be administered by some head or underling in an operating department. The immediate interests of anyone responsible to any degree for operating are bound to be in constant conflict with the ultimate objects and policies of the employment department. From time to time questions arise between employees and heads of operating departments and no one who is a party to these questions is in a position fairly to decide and solve them. The solution of such questions is a function of the employment department and they would be impossible of fair and satisfactory solution if the function of employment were administered by one who might be an interested party. Where, moreover, enough people are employed to make employment a real problem, it is a problem as important and requiring as much, if not more, ability than operating itself and there is no reason why it should not be administered by one who is just as capable and has as much ability in his line as a head of an operating department.

Scientifically speaking, the employment problem really starts after the act of hiring has taken place, and, while the hiring of new people should be a constantly decreasing problem, after they are employed, the employment problem in connection with a new employee is of importance second to none. A new employee, at the best, is undeveloped for the position which he is called upon to fill in any organization, and, as he has been employed in order steadily and permanently to fill a position necessary for the objects of the organization, he needs and is entitled to especial attention in order that he can be developed to fill that position fittingly. For this purpose the greatest possible care must be exercised when new men and women are employed in selecting such as seem not only best fitted for the particular position in question, but, above all, fitted for the organization.

The question of fitness for the organization is the more important and, generally speaking, is the one that can be better determined at the time of employment. It is more important because no matter how skilled or well-fitted a man or woman may be for the given position, if he is not fitted for and in harmony with the organization and its objects, he will not only be inefficient in his surroundings, but will be continuously a detriment to himself and others in the organization. As this is a matter of spirit and inherent attitude of mind, it is a matter that is the more readily detected in the course of a personal interview by anyone with any reasonable amount of training and experience, who makes a specialty of the function of employment.

The determination of the fitness of a new employee for the given position is generally more difficult except, of course, under conditions where the position is one that has been scientifically standardized and the employee has proven his fitness in the same kind of a position under similar conditions of the same degree of standardization elsewhere. As yet, at least, this is of very exceptional occurrence and only the normal case can be considered.

The employee's general physical and mental fitness is an important factor. His physical fitness is of prime consideration and is, as a rule, readily determined. The important thing in this connection is not only to have adequate service to determine physical fitness at the time of employment, but to have a systematic follow-up. The determination of physical fitness in a scientific employment department must not be made with a purpose of eliminating those who are at the time of employment physically unfit, but for the purpose of eliminating only those who are permanently unfit. Many cases, seemingly unfit, are capable of attaining physical fitness and normal health under scientific employment. Such cases should not be eliminated, but should be saved to the industry.

We hear a great deal of late about psychological tests for fitness and there is no doubt that this is a field subject to a great deal of useful and practical development. It will, however, never aid materially in the solution of this problem, except in special instances where definite and special aptitudes are required and can be made subject to practical tests, *e.g.*, it will be conceded that it would be a mistake to employ a railway engineer who could not distinguish red from green readily. Tests of this nature are undoubtedly use-

ful and will figure in a more important way in the future. Practical tests of this kind are being developed by progressive companies. For general purposes, however, these tests will only be useful for a few specific purposes and will, perhaps, be of less importance in an ordinary industrial establishment than in other fields.

In an industrial establishment the character of an employee and his fitness for the organization are the most important things. His fitness for a given position is secondary and depends less upon his mental qualifications at the time of employment than it does upon his development by and in the organization. No matter what the manual skill of an employee might be, if he is out of harmony with the surroundings, he is more of a detriment than a help to the organization and himself. Every organization has definitely perceivable characteristics. We often hear of the "tone" of an organization. When the personality of the employee is out of harmony with this tone, the resultant harm to the organization will be much greater than if he were unfit for the position but in harmony with the organization. This is chiefly a question of character. Unfortunately, as a rule, the importance of character is only recognized in extreme instances. If a man's character were such that he would resort to personal violence or dishonesty, his unfitness would be recognized no matter how fit he might be for the position. If, however, his character were such that he was inherently uncoöperative and resorted to underhandedness, the importance of his character and fitness for the organization would be overlooked in many instances if he showed particular fitness for his position.

Fitness for a given position in the operating departments consists chiefly in the acquirement of skill in the performance of certain manual tasks. Given character and fitness for the organization, the acquirement of skill in the performance of a given duty is generally a matter of proper training being provided by the administrative side of the organization. It must always be remembered that skilled and fit men are not born, but made, and it is an essential function of any industrial organization to train men and make them fit for specific positions necessary to the objects of the organization. There is no broader admission on the part of a manager of his own inefficiency and his own lack of comprehension of his duties and problems than the oft heard complaint on his part of the lack of skilled men.

Under scientific management the management assumes as a definite part of its function the development and training of employees, and the employment function is carried on scientifically in recognition of the above conditions. At the Clothcraft Shops of the Joseph & Feiss Company, all applicants are interviewed by one of the heads of the service and employment department. Information concerning applicants is put down in detail, together with other notes as to various qualifications, upon a form provided for the purpose. During the course of the interview careful note is made of apparent qualification or lack of it. Applications are carefully filed and when a position is to be filled the most promising applicants are sent for. When the applicant is hired, one of the heads of the employment and service department takes him in hand and goes over again in detail such other ground as relates to the condition of employment, which is covered in a more general way at the time of application. This interview is of great importance and covers concisely conditions of his employment both as to the responsibility towards himself and the organization and the responsibility of the organization to him.

As an industrial organization is based on coöperation for continuous mutual benefit, it is very important not only to explain this, but also to explain in detail where the mutuality of interests lies and how necessary coöperation is to obtain continuous mutual benefits. One of the most important responsibilities of the employee is to fill his position steadily and continuously in order that the interests of all concerned will not be jeopardized. In this connection matters very personal and conditions outside the establishment often become very important and must be studied and dealt with as part of the employment problem wherever employment is to be scientifically considered. Volumes could be written on this subject. This phase of the problem alone occupies the larger part of the time and attention of the service and employment department at the Clothcraft Shops of the Joseph & Feiss Company.

This company has given particular attention to this side of the problem and in this connection has made a special study of sanitary conditions and other conditions that affect the health, comfort and contentment of its workers. Medical examinations are compulsory and have been developed to a high state of usefulness. Medical service not only includes a regular practicing physician, but also a

dentist, oculist and a trained nurse. The trained nurse and others of the employment and service department make home visits daily to all absentees, new employees and others. In connection with this side of the employment problem the use of the English language is considered most important and attendance at the English classes at the factory is made compulsory to those who cannot make themselves readily understood in English. Among other things this company has established, for the purpose of dealing with mental and physical fitness of its employees, shower baths, locker rooms, lunch rooms, recreation rooms and recreation grounds, a branch library and a penny bank. The limits of this article do not permit the author to go into detail as to the application of these things to the problem of employment. They all are for the purpose of keeping men and women of the organization in all respects fit to steadily fill their positions as efficiently as possible.

For all purposes of employment there must be a continuous and systematic following up of the individual and there must be established both in spirit and fact an absolutely free contact unhampered and uncontrolled in any respect by any function excepting only the employment function itself.

So far we have considered only the employment problems of the employment function alone. We shall now consider some of the problems of the employment function in its relation to other functions and to extraneous conditions. As to the relation of other functions of the organization to the employment function, there must exist in the first place heartiest coöperation in their administration. The success of other functions greatly depends upon employment and upon this coöperation. Many employment questions arise in the performance of duties connected with these other functions. Although these and many other facts are brought to the attention of the employment department by the development of free contact and the general relationship that must be developed between the employees and the employment heads, it is necessary that all functions are so administered that all such matters are systematically and immediately brought to the attention of the employment department.

While employment is a condition precedent to the performance of many other functions, all such other functions must be administered with a constant view toward the solution of the problems of

employment. All employees, especially new employees, must be given constant and systematic instruction. They must be fairly dealt with in the distribution of work and other matters of functional administration pertaining to them. No functional foreman should be permitted to allow anyone to work who is in the slightest degree dissatisfied, or has the simplest kind of injury, or who is not feeling perfectly well, or who is or is likely to be in any degree physically or mentally unfit, without calling it to the immediate attention of the employment department.

It is the duty of the management under scientific management to standardize all work and working conditions in order that as nearly as possible an even flow of work is maintained throughout the establishment and that all workers have a steady and equal opportunity for continuous employment and earnings. At times of industrial depression the working force should not be cut down except only under such extraordinary conditions as may be forced upon the industry, which are absolutely beyond its control. When there is not enough work to keep the entire working force steadily employed, the number of hours of employment should be reduced equally throughout the whole organization. If all managers realized their duty in this respect, both to their organization and to the community, there would be very little, if any, aggravation of the problem of unemployment during periods of industrial depression.

As far as employment is concerned, there are two problems that daily occupy the attention of the operating departments which materially affect its steadiness. One of these is the balance of materials; the other the balance of personnel. The balance of materials for the purpose of steadiness of operation is recognized to be one of the main responsibilities that the management must assume. Scientific management provides for this by proper planning and routing. Balance of personnel is just as important. Where an employee is missing because of tardiness, absence or other reason, it interferes and seriously affects the steadiness of employment of the whole organization. To meet emergencies of this kind employees should be instructed to perform more than one operation. The most important thing in this connection, however, is that tardiness and absences are cut down and employees are kept as steadily as possible on the job. At the Clothcraft Shops of the Joseph & Feiss Company employees are constantly being instructed to perform new operations and by means mentioned above the service

and employment department has cut down absentees and tardies to such an extent that there are many days when there are no tardies and when the absentees amount to less than one per cent of the working force.

Without going into unnecessary detail, it must be remembered that all interruptions of work and all other delays in the steady flow of work are matters which affect the problem of steadying employment. Before leaving the operative functions and their connection with this problem, it is essential that we remind ourselves that steadiness of employment depends upon personal relationship as much as upon anything else. For this purpose it is not only important to consider personality in the selection of the ordinary employee for a position, but it is still more important to consider the proper personality or the possibility of its development in the selection of functional heads who have constant contact with any part of the organization. Such heads are very often chosen merely for their mechanical ability and are generally responsible for a great many unnecessary quitters and a consequent unsteadiness of employment. The general question of personal relationship is a question of managerial policy of the greatest importance and the social problem must not only be met by such means as touched upon above, but a social spirit based upon real democracy must be developed as a matter of policy throughout all ranks of the organization.

The seasonableness of certain industries is generally recognized as one of the extraneous problems affecting steadiness of employment. A great deal of education of the buying public is necessary to assist in overcoming this condition. A great deal, however, can be done by competent management to mitigate this difficulty. For this purpose buying should be standardized to aid in the anticipation of orders. The most important problem in this connection is the selling problem. The development of the sales problem and the sales organization is generally far behind the development of the manufacturing problem and the manufacturing organization. Steps must be taken in order to insure sales not only of product that is easy to sell, but chiefly such product that can be continuously, and, therefore, profitably manufactured with the least interference with the steadiness of employment.

Mr. Morris L. Cooke, director of Public Works, Philadelphia, in an able address on "Scientific Management as a Solution of the

Unemployment Problem”¹ tells of a case in the hosiery industry in the Philadelphia district where it was found that those mills which sold their output through a single selling agent found their business very seasonable and subject to varying demands of output. All those mills which sold their own goods and developed the sales policy co-related to the problem of manufacture were able to regularize their demand as far as output was concerned to a very great extent.

The Joseph & Feiss Company, in order to meet this problem of seasonableness with a direct purpose of steadying employment, have for some time past conducted an advertising campaign which concentrated on certain of its products that could be produced from season to season without being much affected by the style question. As a rule, there is nothing more annoying to the industrial manager than this problem, as the sales policy is generally not within his control and there is no extraneous function which more affects his problem of steadying employment and whose proper relationship to this function is more misunderstood.

Volumes could be written on steadying of employment and the employment problem in general, but proper consideration and reasonable effort expended along the lines suggested above will prove more profitable in result than can readily be comprehended. It has already been shown that the Clothcraft Shops have reduced tardies and absentees to a minimum. No greater proof of the effect of steadying employment in an industrial establishment can be had than the record of the “labor turn-over” in this shop in the past four years. During the period covered from June, 1910, to July, 1914, the labor turn-over of the Clothcraft Shops has been reduced by 80 per cent.

The importance of this problem is only beginning to be recognized. Most managers make a study of their mechanical problem and consider it a necessity, not only to be equipped with the most efficient and up-to-date machinery, but to make a study of its use and the keeping of it in constant repair for steady work. But few recognize that this attitude in connection with personnel is of far greater importance. Steadiness of materials and machinery is only the adjunct to the real problem of steadiness of employment. In order to meet with real success, it must be recognized that it is a function of management not only to build up a “manufactory,” but to build up a “man factory.”

¹ Delivered before the Cleveland Advertising Club, May 19, 1915.